

Minnesota Statewide Cow Testing Association

Its Organization, Aims, and Plan of Operation

By H. R. Searles

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WHAT THE MEMBERS SAY OF IT

I tested in the Wisconsin Mail Order Association for two years and found it a very convenient, satisfactory means of testing.

SAM GOSS,
Houston, Minn.

— o —

We are well pleased with the service, finding the expense less and the service O.K. for our purpose, that is, the detection of the slacker.

H. H. POND & SON,
F. WILSON POND,
Richfield Station, Minneapolis, Minn.

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I write this to show my appreciation to the sponsors and executives of the M. S. C. T. A. I think the project is and will be of great value to the dairymen of Minnesota, particularly at this time and under these conditions. After testing my herd for four months, I see the great advantages and will certain continue next year.

J. H. MARSHALL,
Eden Prairie, Minn.

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I have been testing my herds in the Minnesota State-wide C. T. A. the past four months (ever since it started), and I am very well satisfied with the new method of testing. I rather enjoy the taking of samples and weighing the milk once a month myself, the sample cans are so handy.

H. A. ILLSLEY,
Faribault, Minn.

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We believe that the state of Minnesota has made a great step in advancing higher production for herd averages in what is called the Statewide C. T. A. Each farmer can find out in an economical way what his cows are doing.

We have had considerable experience in cowtesting work and we are sure, after the present system becomes better known, it will be very popular. We also believe that in not advertising records, farmers will not contest with one another and the real reason for the farmer to test will be to find the culls that he has in his herd.

JOHN KISPERT & SON,
Nerstrand, Minn.

— o —

I think that mail testing gives the farmer a chance to build up his herd at low cost

FRED E. SCHMIDT,
Altura, Minn.

MINNESOTA STATEWIDE COWTESTING ASSOCIATION

H. R. SEARLES

The Minnesota Statewide Cow Testing Association offers a means of securing individual cow records. It is open to any Minnesota farmer and is the simplest, cheapest means of obtaining cow records that has ever been offered. It should appeal to the progressive dairy farmer who has found it impossible to take advantage of the testing services available in the past.

What it means to the farmer.—This table shows the relationship between production per cow and returns during 1930.

Production per cow	Income per cow	Feed cost per cow	Return per cow over feed cost	No. cows to return \$1000 over feed cost
lb.				
100.....	\$ 40	\$37	\$ 3	333
200.....	80	47	33	30
300.....	120	59	61	16
400.....	160	71	89	11

The foregoing table gives last year with fat at 40 cents per pound. Below are what we may expect of 1931 with fat at 30 cents a pound.

Production per cow	Income per cow	Feed cost per cow	Return per cow over feed cost	No. cows to return \$1000 over feed cost
lb.				
100.....	\$ 30	\$34	\$ 4 loss	Impossible
200.....	60	42	18	55
300.....	90	52	38	26
400.....	120	61	59	17

In this table the grain prices have been reduced 25 per cent below 1930.

This comparison of this year with last brings out the fact, that while it was desirable to cull the low cows last year, it is absolutely necessary now. The 100-pound cow paid for her feed last year even tho she returned little profit. This year she turns in a cash loss on the feed alone of \$4.00, even with the lower feed cost. The income from all cows is cut down; but the loss is a much higher percentage of the total on the low-producing cows. They must go this year. The slacker cow can no longer be carried in the bread line.

You will notice that the 300-pound cow this year makes more returns over feed than the 200-pound cow did last year. The 400-pound cow lacks only \$2.00 of returning as much this year as the 300-pound cow last year, with fat selling for 10 cents less.

Cows are kept as a market for feed, farm feed. Feed worth \$1000 fed to

100-lb. cows would return \$	870,	feed cost 34 cts. per lb.		
200-lb. " " "	1380	" " 21 "	"	"
300-lb. " " "	1710	" " 17 "	"	"
400-lb. " " "	1920	" " 15 "	"	"

The 100-pound cows lack \$130 of paying market price for their feed. With oats at 30 cents per bushel the 100-pound cow pays 26 cents for them, the 200-pound cow pays 41 cents, the 300-pound cow 51 cents, and the 400-pound cow 57 cents a bushel.

With hay worth \$10 a ton, the 100-pound cow pays \$8.70 per ton for hers, the 200-pound cow \$13.80, the 300-pound cow \$17.10 and the 400-pound cow pays \$19.20.

The Minnesota Statewide Cow Testing Association offers a means of securing a good market for the farm dairy feed. It offers a service that will allow the owner to put his feed only into the cow that will pay a fair price for it.

Is it new?—No, it is not new. It is nearly as old as the Babcock test; but it remained for a Wisconsin county agent to put into the plan of testing cows by mail the things that were necessary to make it a success. It has been operating in one Wisconsin county for the last six years, and now it is being rapidly adopted in other counties in Wisconsin, as a method of obtaining individual cow records.

Financing.—The project at the outset is being financed by funds supplied to the University by the Minnesota Statewide Cow Testing Association. A revolving fund has been secured from Twin City business men for the purpose. The association is a non-profit, non-stock association incorporated to put the project into operation. It is assumed that the association will take active charge of the project when it becomes a going concern. It will then be on a self-supporting basis, and the testing fees will pay all costs, including those for the field service.

Securing the records.—Under the plan, the central laboratory, where samples are tested, is located at University Farm. The laboratory is equipped with the latest labor-saving devices, and manned by efficient testers and a clerical staff. Once each month, just previous to the testing day for an individual, a box containing sample cans, one for each cow in the herd, is mailed out to the individual member by parcel post. Included in the box is also the record sheet on which the owner will record the weight of the night and the morning milking from each cow. This sheet is returned to the central office, with the milk samples, the day following the arrival of the box. As soon as the samples arrive at the central office, each cow's milk is tested, and the monthly production is determined from the amount of milk on the report sheet and from the test made at the laboratory. The report sheet, showing the number of pounds of milk, the result of the test, and the number of pounds of butterfat for the month, and for all the months up to date, are then immediately returned by mail to the owner. In most places in Minnesota the production report for the month should be back in the owner's hands in from three to five days after the samples are taken.

At the end of the year the owner receives an annual report on his herd, showing the total amount of milk, the average test, and the total amount of butterfat from each cow, and the average for the herd.

Field service.—Experience has shown that one of the essential features of successful testing work is field service. In the standard dairy-herd improvement associations, the farmer has contact with the tester; and the help that is derived from him in management and feeding problems is of great value. The successful associations have been those manned with efficient testers, capable of helping members with their dairy problems. The associations, with testers capable of keeping the records but lacking in a sufficient knowledge of dairying, either had to change testers, or else in a comparatively short time they passed out of the picture.

The field service of the statewide association consists, in part, of service by mail in answering direct questions on feeding problems, such as the balancing of rations, and suggestions on how much and what to feed most economically under existing conditions. The field service, however, goes further than this. Meetings are held in the various localities where the members are located. At these meetings, feeding, breeding, and other problems are discussed.

Personal field service can be secured only by organizing a local group of 25 or more for fieldman to work with. Individual members who are unable to get direct personal contact with the fieldman can obtain at least part of the needed information by mail from the Agricultural Extension Division at University Farm. They can also take their feeding problems to the county agent or to some neighboring dairyman who will gladly help them.

The local units.—To make effective field service possible, the membership, so far as possible, should be organized in local groups. The local unit is the creamery, where there is one. Where there is no creamery, some other local organization is formed. The local creamery or organization takes the responsibility of building up the local unit, of securing members, and also of deducting the costs from the cream checks each month and remitting to the central office at University Farm.

DETAILED PLAN OF OPERATION

The University Agricultural Extension Division:

1. Has complete charge of the laboratory and the office.
2. Assists in the initiation of the project in the counties that are interested.
3. Directs the field service through the county agents and the creameries.

The county extension service:

1. Has complete charge of the project in the counties when the extension work is in progress.

2. Approaches the local creameries and explains the project to them.
3. Is represented by the county agent as an ex-officio member of all local committees.
4. Through the county agent, assists and directs the fieldman in the county.

The local co-operative creamery or local unit:

1. Appoints a cow-testing committee, including the county agent as ex-officio member.
2. Signs an agreement with the central office to collect fees monthly and remit to the central office.
3. Takes an active interest in securing members and holding meetings.
4. Keeps milk scales on hand, to sell at cost.

Other co-operating agencies are:

1. Local farm bureau units or other local community clubs.
2. Local banks and county bankers' associations.
3. Local business men's associations.
4. The state and local press.
5. High school agricultural instructors.

These organizations and agencies can all be of considerable assistance in creating interest in the project and helping to carry it out.

HOW THE PLAN WORKS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER

1. The member signs a request for his creamery secretary to deduct his cost from his monthly cream check until further notice.
2. He buys a milk scale from his creamery at cost.
3. The secretary notifies the central office to send a sample box to the member in the month in which he wishes to start.
4. When the box arrives, the farmer weighs and samples the milk from each cow, night and morning, and returns the samples of milk to the central laboratory by mail. (Return postage is furnished.)
5. He receives in return in a few days a herd production report for the month.
6. At the end of the year he receives a herd production report showing individual production and the herd average for the year.
7. A member may include a skim milk sample each month free of charge.
8. A member may start testing at any time of the year.
9. A member may request feeding service by mail. These requests will be answered by the Agricultural Extension Division through the field service.
10. If there are 25 or more members in a community, a local unit is completed, and the fieldman conducts

meetings from time to time throughout the year to discuss local dairy problems.

11. Individual members' records are private, and are not given publicity by the association. Members may give them any publicity they may choose.

12. Those who wish to become members, yet cannot interest enough neighbors to form a local unit, may send in their membership fee directly, paying a full year in advance. Such members will receive the complete service of the organization, except that it will be impossible for them to secure personal field service from the fieldman.

THE COST

The cost to a member is \$15 a year for a herd of 10 cows or less. For each additional cow the cost is \$1 a year more. If a member pays through a creamery by monthly deductions, his fee is \$1.25 a month for a herd of 10 cows or less, and $8\frac{1}{3}$ cents a month for each additional cow. A cow will be considered in the herd and charged for during her dry period. Charges on a cow stop when she is marked "sold" on the sheet. Cows or freshening heifers added to the herd start payment on their testing date. Individual members who are not paying by the month receive a statement the eleventh month, giving complete charges for the year on the monthly basis as outlined above.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A LOCAL UNIT

1. Local creameries that are interested will make an agreement with the Statewide Cow Testing Association to make the monthly deductions for testing costs from their patrons who request it, as per agreement with the state office.

2. The local creamery board will appoint a committee, including the county agent as an ex-officio member, to take charge of the local organization.

This committee then will:

1. Arrange for a meeting of the patrons, where the county agent or dairy specialist will explain the project in detail.
2. Secure the required number of members to form a local unit—25 members.
3. Call another meeting of the signed-up members later on for definite instructions in starting the testing, how to take samples, etc.
4. Assist in arranging meetings for field service—co-operating with the county agent on this and all matters pertaining to the testing work.

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